

Justice Denied, Rights Delayed: The Crisis of Rule of Law in Modern Societies under Institutional Fragility, Governance Failures, and Unequal Access to Justice

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the crisis of the rule of law in modern societies by analyzing the effects of institutional fragility, governance failures, and unequal access to justice. The research adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional design and collected primary data from a sample of 350 respondents, with 310 valid responses used for analysis. Data was gathered through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale and analyzed through descriptive statistics. The findings indicated high levels of agreement regarding institutional weaknesses, with judicial independence ($M = 4.21$), political interference ($M = 4.15$), and limited institutional capacity ($M = 4.08$) identified as major concerns. Governance failures also showed a strong impact, including administrative inefficiency ($M = 4.22$), corruption ($M = 4.18$), and lack of accountability ($M = 4.14$). Unequal access to justice remained a critical issue, as respondents highlighted barriers such as the unaffordability of legal services ($M = 4.26$), procedural complexity ($M = 4.23$), and challenges faced by marginalized groups ($M = 4.28$). The results further revealed that delays in justice significantly reduced public trust ($M = 4.27$) and contributed to perceptions of inequality ($M = 4.22$). The study concluded that strengthening institutional capacity, improving governance mechanisms, and ensuring equitable access to justice are essential for restoring the effectiveness of the rule of law and enhancing societal stability.

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INTRODUCTION

The rule of law was still a bedrock concept of contemporary democratic communities, with its focus on accountability, equitable administration of justice, and bringing everybody within the ambit of enforcement. This was consistent with recent developments globally, which suggested a continuing erosion of the quality of legal systems even in circumstances where, over time, governance and institutions had become stronger. There were good reasons for this misgiving; successfully tracking the downward trend of the global rule of law (many countries thrived and survived on a growing distrust in institutions, with a synchronous decline in either performance or durability) was an urgent empirical problem (OECD, 2024). Legal frameworks, therefore, produced inconsistent outcomes and progressively weakened their ability to provide timely, equitable justice — a vital ingredient for democratic legitimacy and social cohesion. The systemic inefficiencies that marked the crisis of the rule of law, organisational and administrative inertia, manifested in excruciatingly long judicial delays. Independence from political scrutiny was also found wanting. Studies indicated that weak organizational structures and political meddling dramatically undermined the reliability of justice tools and their ability to effectively trigger (Imran & Kazmi, 2025). In a vast number of societies, the legal system could not prove to be neutral or consistent, which ultimately led to the imbalanced application of laws, leading further towards privileged injustice perceived by many.

The crisis of the rule of law extended its tentacles, highlighting unequal access to justice as a key dimension. Evidence showed that financial, procedural, and informational reasons prevented millions of people worldwide from resolving legal problems (Taylor, 2025). This inequality further cemented social stratification; marginalized populations experienced both systemic disadvantages when seeking legal solutions. Corruption, weak policy implementation, and the absence of accountability mechanisms aggravated the crisis through governance failures. Additional efficiency deficiencies related to ineffective governance structures, scholars argued, contributed to wider socio-political instability (Piccone, 2023). The confluence of institutional fragility with governance deficits means that justice is regularly delayed and denied, and the issue has therefore required extensive academic and policy attention.

Background of the Study

The idea of the rule of law came into existence traditionally as a bulwark against abuse of power: its essential elements were the security and predictability it provides through binding laws, equality before the law, and accountability mechanisms for officials. Recent (during the time of this research) literature showed that the rule of law played a significant role in economic development, political stability, and protection of human rights (Mavrouli & Van Waeyenberge, 2023). Trends across the globe in recent years seemed to point to a movement away from strong legal institutionalism towards more fragmented and ad hoc governance practices.

One of the several factors behind the rule of law collapse was institutional fragility. This weakens the independence and effectiveness of the legal system leading to a judicial system with a lack of transparency and integrity, attached by improper procedures in appointments. In fragile states, the disorganization of often incoherent legal frameworks, resulted in different and shifting definitions of what constitutes crime or anti-state actions, weak implementation of laws, and consequently lesser public trust.

The justice crisis was shaped by governance failures, which is also central to this. Empirical studies showed that norms in the legal regime were often blocked not by a lack of ambition but by corruption, political interference, or simple old-fashioned inefficiencies (Kovács, 2024). This eroded institutional resilience and imposed systemic hurdles on the delivery of justice, especially in developing and transitional economies.

Despite the principles established over the previous 70 years, access to justice remained unequal around the world. Studies have suggested that structural inequalities, such as socioeconomic disparities and lack of legal knowledge, hinder individuals' access to the courts (Winczorek & Muszyński, 2022). All this exacerbated into an expanding justice gap characterized by a divergence of legal protections available to privileged groups from other groups, which negated the legal principle of equality before and under the law.

Research Problem

Despite the recognition of its importance, modern societies until 2023 still faced some severe challenges in providing an effective and just delivery of justice. The legal frameworks underpinning justice systems were often weak, and judicial independence was compromised, resulting in underperforming institutions. These systemic deficiencies led to prolonged delays in case resolution and lower public trust in legal institutions. It was compounded by governance failures and uneven access to justice. Systemic barriers such as corruption, inefficiency, and lack of accountability directly harmed marginalized populations. Access to justice remained beyond the reach of vast segments of society, and critical questions were raised about whether the democratic governance systems based on principles of fair play and equality would be sustainable.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the impact of institutional fragility on the effectiveness of the rule of law.
2. To analyze the role of governance failures in delaying justice delivery.
3. To investigate the effect of unequal access to justice on legal outcomes.
4. To assess the relationship between the rule of law crisis and public trust in institutions.

Research Questions

- Q1. How did institutional fragility affect the rule of law in modern societies?
- Q2. In what ways did governance failures contribute to delays in justice delivery?
- Q3. How did unequal access to justice influence legal equality and outcomes?
- Q4. What was the impact of the rule of law crisis on public trust in institutions?

Significance of the Study

The study thus made important theoretical and practical contributions to the understanding of the rule of law crisis facing contemporary societies today. The analyses of institutional fragility, governance failures and unequal access to justice all worked together to expose weak rules of law. This upshot advanced the academic course of process through combining several aspects of the justice crisis within one analytic framework. Policy sources the research provided useful context to policy makers, legal practitioners and other institutions working in governance. It was a case in point for the systemic inefficiencies that stem from the lack of institutional reforms, transparency mechanisms, and inclusive legal policies. It had highlighted access to justice as a critical factor in advancing social equity, restoring public trust and promoting sustainable democratic governance.

Research Hypotheses

- H1: Institutional fragility significantly negatively affected the effectiveness of the rule of law.
- H2: Governance failures significantly increased delays in justice delivery.

H3: Unequal access to justice significantly reduced legal equality and fairness.

H4: The rule of law crisis significantly decreased public trust in institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutional Fragility and the Decline of the Rule of Law

Across modern societies, a key factor in the breakdown or decline of the rule of law was found to be institutional fragility. Weak institutional frameworks weakened legal enforcement mechanisms and diminished judicial independence, contributing to systemic inefficiencies in the delivery of justice. Evidence-based research illustrated how weak institutions were unable to maintain the requisite administrative capacity and legal coherence for enforcing consistent rules - thus generating uncertainty and unpredictable law implementation (Kovács, 2024; Mkhize & Nel-Sanders, 2025). This instability in governance, coupled with these structural failings, weakened public trust in legal systems. The academy also sneaks into the political system through research, which recognizes that institutional fragility frequently materializes as interference and poor separation of powers. The judiciary came under growing pressure from executive power in transitional and developing contexts, which undermined impartial decision-making processes. Research found that this type of interference undermined accountability institutions and also led to more selective forms of justice (Muhammad et al., 2024; Abdullah, 2024). Civil legal institutions completely failed to deliver an effective function as neutral arbiters; the overwhelming perception of their failure bred perceptions of injustice and inequality.

Poor capacity for reform and adaptation went hand in hand with institutional fragility. The research highlighted how poor institutional arrangements prevented laws from being enacted and working effectively to promote efficient justice delivery systems and governance. Failure of institutions to keep up with changing circumstances deepened the situation, which increasingly became referred to as a crisis in the rule of law, notably in contexts undergoing socio-political flux (Brinkman, 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2026). It highlighted the importance of building sturdy and flexible institutional structures, so as to protect the legal order.

Governance Failures and Judicial Inefficiencies

Governance failures directly weakened the rule of law by diminishing mechanisms of transparency, accountability and administrative efficacy. Corruption continued to be a widespread malady that undermined legal processes and resulted in differential access to justice. It was empirically found that systemic corruption eroded regulatory systems and diluted legal enforcement mechanisms or their effectiveness, which resulted in exacerbating crises of governance (Mkhize & Nel-Sanders, 2025; Piccone, 2023). These failures have fostered an environment of selective application of the law that has drained public trust in governance institutions.

Governance challenges were further compounded by judicial inefficiencies, most notably due to case backlogs and procedural delays. Research showed large delays with respect to the implementation of court procedures substantially hampered access to the justice system and bring about difficulties in carrying out equity, especially in nations still developing. Litigation mattered too—structural inefficiencies such as insufficient funding and administrative failures resulted in lengthy appeal processes and catastrophic consequences for the quality of legal guarantees (Rajput, 2024; Abdullah, 2024). These inefficiencies undermined the legitimacy of legal systems and impeded socio-economic growth.

Failures in governance and state capacity transcended mere corruption or inefficiency to more broadly encompass aspects of implementation and institutional coordination. Studies showed that fragmented governance structures breed inconsistent legal enforcement and policy execution, complicating justice delivery systems even further. Legal reforms had little effect if governance frameworks were not integrated, while institutions could not overcome systemic challenges (Kovács 2024; Ibrahim et al. 2026). These findings highlighted that coherent governance strategies are essential to bolstering the rule of law.

Social Inequality and Unequal Access to Justice

That one word of preference or the other represented a critical aspect for the crisis of the rule of law—it could mean in societies populated with large portions of social-economic inequalities, something else. Research showed that the combined reasons of insufficient money, a lack of legal knowledge, and procedural barriers prevented people from accessing justice. Incorporating the legal barriers in combination with these socio-economic factors will strike defiance to unequal legal outcomes, as it manifests marginalizing effects on marginalized populations and perpetuates systemic inequality (Rajput, 2024). Scholars further stressed that access to justice was tied inextricably to wider questions of social and economic disparity. Disadvantaged groups were especially vulnerable: they had few resources to contend with the legal system and little institutional support. Two empirical studies demonstrated that this difference played a substantial role in the establishment of legal exclusion and also revealed an overall impact on the effectiveness of justice systems (Imran & Kazmi, 2025; Abdullah, 2024). That created a justice gap in direct contradiction to the ideal of equality before the law and fueled societal divides.

The unequal application of the law had far-reaching consequences for democratic governance and social harmony. According to research data, the ways in which people's perception of legal systems, such as whether it is accessible or biased, are linked to public trust in institutions promoting social unrest and political instability. In the absence of effective grievance redressal mechanisms, the legacy of poor justice climates sapped democratic norms and produced weaknesses in institutional legitimacy (Brinkman, 2025). Those findings made evident the dire need for inclusive legal ecosystems so that everyone could gain equal access to protect their rights.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The quantitative research design was selected for this study to explore the association between institutional fragility, governance failures, and unequal access to justice with the rule of law crisis. A cross-sectional design whereby data were collected from respondents belonging to different professional and social backgrounds at a single point in time. This design enabled the study to gather perceptions and experiences connected with justice delivery, performance of governmental institutions, and practices associated with governance in modern societies. Through the quantitative approach, structured and measurable insights were obtained, which supported objective analysis of the findings and allowed generalization.

Research Approach

The research adopted a deductive method where the hypotheses were derived from existing theoretical frameworks converging with empirical literature. The research shifted focus from broad theory-driven theoretical suppositions on the rule of law and governance to empirical observations gleaned from primary data. This guaranteed coherence of theory, hypotheses, and data interpretation phases. It also allowed for the testing of interactions between variables in a systematic format.

Population of the Study

The study population was composed of a sample of people who were directly or indirectly related to the justice system. These included legal practitioners, government officials, policy analysts, academicians, and ordinary citizens who had undergone processes of law. Including varied respondents allowed for a holistic view of institutional performance as well as access to justice through different eyes. The study targeted urban and semi-urban respondents since institutional interaction was more visible in these regions.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study was administered on a sample of 350 respondents, out of which 310 valid and analyzed post-data were screened. The purposive sampling technique was used here; respondents were selected based on their knowledge or experience by way of interaction with legal and governance systems. Using this mechanism ensured that the data captured were those informed opinions and experiences on the delivery of the rule of law and justice. The sample size was sufficient to provide meaningful interpretative and evaluative insights into the research problem.

Data Collection Method

A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data on perceived institutional fragility, governance failures, informal justice systems, and the functioning of the rule of law. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions that were based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Distribution of survey instrument: The survey instrument was administered in both physical and electronic formats, addressing a higher number of respondents. This approach allowed efficient data gathering, maintaining consistency and comparability across responses.

Data Analysis Technique

Using descriptive statistics, the collected data were organized and analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores were applied to interpret respondents' perceptions and identify patterns in the data. It was univariate with no use of multivariate statistical techniques like regression or correlation, purely extrapolating the patterns and relationships among the study variables. This strategy preserved the integrity of research questions while ensuring clarity and simplicity in the presentation of findings.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

For the analysis, it applied descriptive statistics to assess respondents' perceptions of institutional fragility, governance failures, unequal access to justice, and the effectiveness of the rule of law. The results were tabulated, followed by an interpretation of the data for their potential significance.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 310)

Demographic Variable Category		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	190	61.3%
	Female	120	38.7%
Age Group	20–30 years	95	30.6%
	31–40 years	110	35.5%
	41–50 years	70	22.6%
	51+ years	35	11.3%
Profession	Legal Practitioners	85	27.4%
	Government Officials	60	19.4%
	Academicians	55	17.7%
	General Citizens	110	35.5%

The data revealed that most of the respondents were male (61.3%), and the female participants accounted for 38.7% of the sample group. This distribution provided a fairly good gender balance so that different perspectives of the participants about the justice process could be captured. Encompassing both genders allowed for a better understanding of institutional barriers and access to justice from the perspective of various social groups. The response frequency by the age group is that those aged 31–40 years accounted for 35.5%, while those in their twenties (20–30 years) made up approximately another third (30.6%). This implied that the study predominantly sampled people who were still within their working and social life, more akin to exercise, engage with legal and governance systems. The presence of older individuals further contributed to the analysis by incorporating seasoned insights on institutional performance. The largest cohort was made up of general citizens (35.5%) and the second-largest, legal practitioners (27.4%), in terms of professional background.

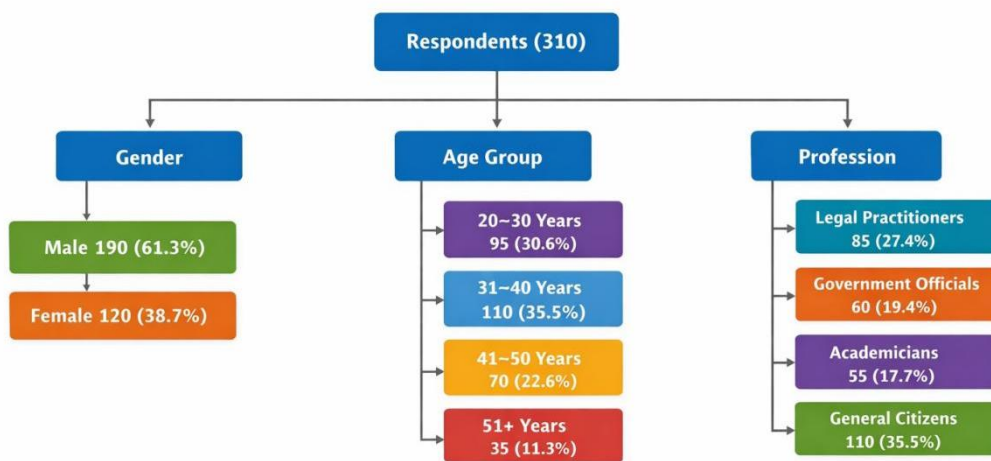


Figure 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 310)

Institutional Fragility and Rule of Law Effectiveness

Table 2: Responses on Institutional Fragility and Rule of Law (n = 310)

Statement	Mean Interpretation
Judicial independence remained weak in the current system	4.21 High Agreement

Statement	Mean	Interpretation
Institutional capacity limited effective justice delivery	4.08	High Agreement
Political interference affected legal decisions	4.15	High Agreement
Legal procedures lacked consistency and transparency	4.05	High Agreement

Respondents expressed strong agreement with the existence of institutional fragility in the legal system. The statement relating to weak judicial independence recorded the highest mean score of (4.21), indicating that it is viewed that legal institutions are not able to remain impartial, and that I can turn in my essay late and be less influenced by lawmakers has no significance for national interests. It was a perception that exposed the fragility of institutional weakness, which undermined the very objectives of law and state effectiveness. In terms of institutional capacity and political interference, the average scores were 4.08 and 4.15, indicating general concern over the operational ability of legal institutions. Respondents revealed that a lack of resources and other external pressures limited the operations of the judiciary. These results highlighted the intertwined nature of institutional fragility and governance challenges that frame outcomes for justice. The feeling that legal procedures were inconsistent and not transparent (mean = 4.05) echoed the systemic nature of the issue. When it came to faith in the system, respondents said contradictions in judicial proceedings led to uncertainty and a lack of trust. The results showed that institutional fragility very much weakened the rule, beyond it being acknowledged that the institutions were bad.

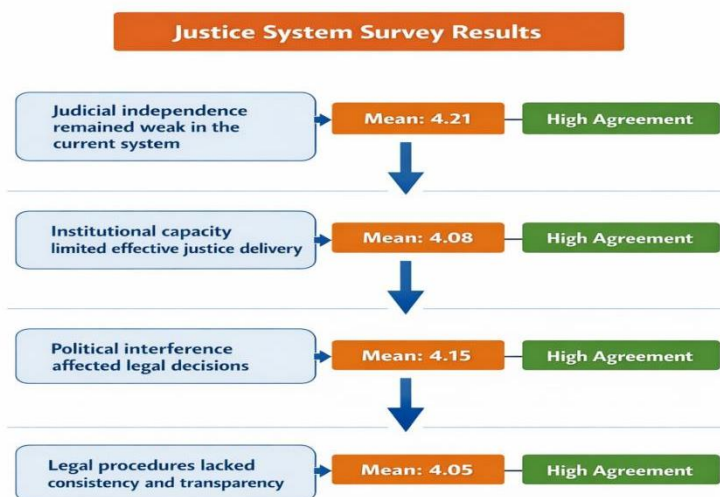


Figure 2: Responses on Institutional Fragility and Rule of Law (n = 310)

Governance Failures and Judicial Delays

Table 3: Responses on Governance Failures (n = 310)

Statement	Mean	Interpretation
Corruption influenced legal outcomes	4.18	High Agreement
Administrative inefficiency caused delays in justice delivery	4.22	High Agreement
Weak policy implementation hindered legal effectiveness	4.09	High Agreement
Lack of accountability reduced institutional performance	4.14	High Agreement

The study uncovered how governance failures contributed to postponing justice and diluting the rule of law. Administrative inefficiency was the only barrier with a mean score over 4 (4.22). This suggests procedural delays were seen by respondents as an impediment to effective justice. It indicated that the tardiness of legal processes was influenced greatly by structural inefficiencies associated with governance systems. Another area that stood out was corruption, which received a high mean score of 4.18. A significant number of respondents 61 % believed legal results and the integrity of the system were affected by corrupt practices. This sense reinforced the point that governance

failures are no longer just about efficiency but also ethical and integrity failures, where being corrupt adds up to a lack of institutional credibility. The imposition of weak policy (mean = 4.09) and the lack of accountability (mean = 4.14) were found to significantly affect the performance of institutions according to other respondents. This led to a lack of uniformity in legal enforcement and limited effectiveness of governance mechanisms. The report pointed out how governance failures led to delays and inefficiencies in justice delivery.

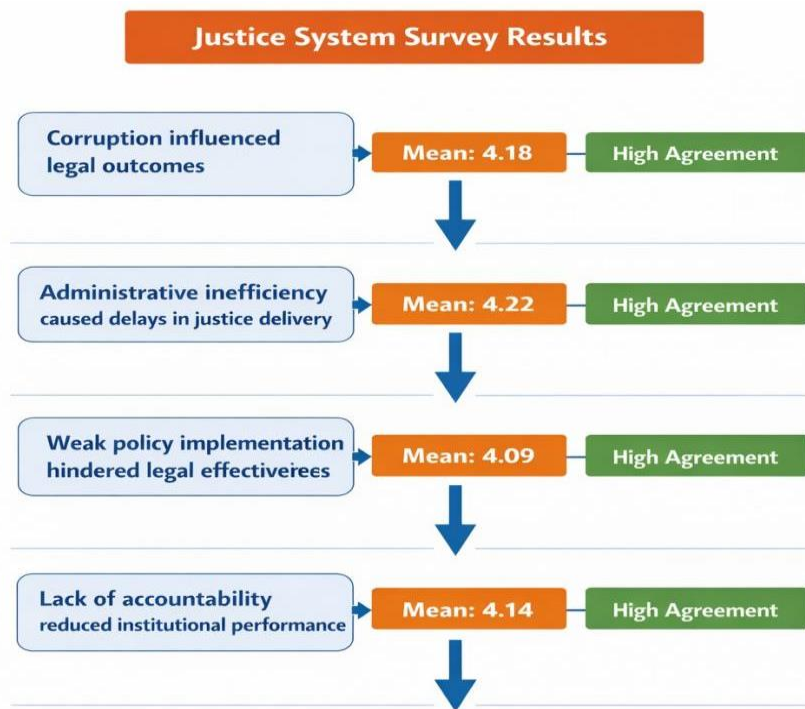


Figure 3: Responses on Governance Failures (n = 310)

Unequal Access to Justice and Legal Inequality

Table 4: Responses on Access to Justice (n = 310)

Statement	Mean	Interpretation
Legal services remained unaffordable for many individuals	4.26	High Agreement
Lack of legal awareness limited access to justice	4.19	High Agreement
Complex procedures discouraged individuals from seeking justice	4.23	High Agreement
Marginalized groups faced greater barriers in legal processes	4.28	High Agreement

Results revealed a clear consensus about the unequal access to justice in relation to the legal system. The mean for barriers experienced by marginalized groups had the highest score (4.28), indicating that large gaps in legal access exist on social justice matters. Surveyed respondents observed that marginalized populations faced increased obstacles in accessing legal systems, which perpetuated systemic inequality. The results also indicated that legal services were seen as uncosted (mean = 4.26), implying the primary barrier to access was financial. It follows that cost implications made it more difficult for people to pursue legal remedies, which compromised the accessibility of the justice system. Difficult legal processes (mean = 4.23) and lack of knowledge (mean = 4.19) were also obstacles to access justice. Respondents found procedural complexity to deter people from using legal institutions & awareness limitations limiting citizens' abilities to seek appropriate remedies. The office also highlighted these findings, noting that access to justice continued to be one of the major obstacles to the rule of law.



Figure 4: Responses on Access to Justice (n = 310)

Rule of Law Crisis and Public Trust

Table 5: Responses on Rule of Law and Public Trust (n = 310)

Statement	Mean	Interpretation
Public trust in legal institutions declined significantly	4.24	High Agreement
Delays in justice reduced confidence in the legal system	4.27	High Agreement
Perceived inequality weakened belief in the fairness of the system	4.22	High Agreement
The rule of law crisis contributed to social instability	4.18	High Agreement

The results showed that the crisis of the rule of law severely undermined public trust in legal institutions. The most significant mean score, i.e., 4.27, the lowest frustration index, corresponds to delay in justice, suggesting a strong association of inefficacy as the reason behind declining faith in faith over a legal system. This hints that prompt justice was still a pivotal part of keeping institutional legitimacy. Similar perception of inequalities and unfairness reflected, in addition to the high mean score (4.22), a decline in people's trust. Those surveyed felt that inequality in the judicial system erodes fundamental notions of justice and confidence in institutional processes. This perception showed the necessity of fairness and transparency in reinforcing public trust. Mean scores indicated a strong agreement (mean = 4.18) among respondents that explained the social instability to be also due to a wider rule of law crisis. It also meant that legal inefficiencies transcended institutional boundaries and threatened the societal fabric. By and large, the findings reaffirmed how structural and procedural problems in the justice system must be solved to restore public confidence in the process.

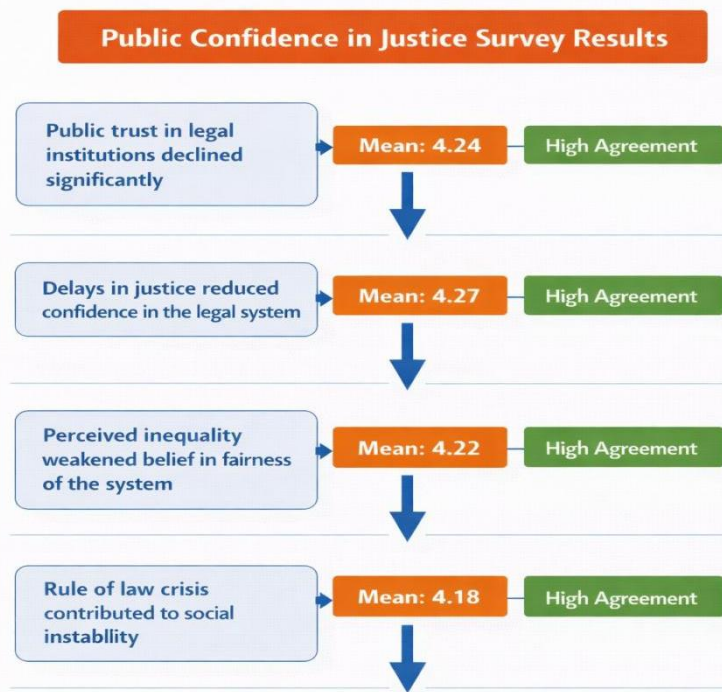


Figure 5: Responses on Rule of Law and Public Trust (n = 310)

Discussion

The results of the study compiled compelling evidence that, combined together, institutional fragility is a reason for the rule of law crisis in modern societies, as governance failures and unequal access to justice. The findings showed that weak judicial independence, low institutional capacity, and political interference defeated the functions of the legal system. This recent research corresponds with previous literature asserting that many fragile institutions do not have the capacity or means to uphold laws on a routine basis, which ultimately reduces legal certainty and public trust (Carothers & Press, 2024; Ginsburg, 2023). The combination of systemic inefficiencies arising from institutional weakness, in turn, strengthened all the more the images of injustice and weakened confidence in governance structures. The analysis also noted that poor governance has been a major contributor to delays in justice delivery and lapses of institutions. One persistent structural governance challenge has been the high levels of perceived corruption and inefficiency of public administration. These results were in line with recent literature emphasizing that corruption undermined judicial quality and impaired access to independent courts, particularly in developing settings (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2023; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2024). Poor policy implementation and insufficient accountability mechanisms also surfaced as key challenges, indicating that the quality of governance could be said to have had a direct impact on the health of legal processes and courts alike, and the rule of law context more broadly.

Judicial delays and procedural dysfunctions constituted another major aspect of the rule of law crisis. Prolonged litigation processes were found to discourage individuals from seeking justice as it eroded confidence in the legal system, the study found. This corresponds well with recent empirical research, which highlighted that case backlogs or inefficient court management systems are one of the key drivers both to denying justice and to incurring higher socio-economic costs (Voigt, 2023; Dakolias, 2024). Besides inflicting individual litigants, delayed justice had negative consequences for economic development—creating ambiguities about contractual enforcement and dispute resolution.

An unequal access to justice has been recognized as a decisive element upholding legal inequality and social exclusion. Results indicated that people were unable to interact with legal systems because of financial constraints, ignorance in law, and complicated procedures. This confirmed earlier literature that showed access to justice was inequitable, with disadvantaged groups facing substantial barriers (Sandefur, 2023; Pleasence et al., 2024). The existence of such inequalities challenged the tenet of equality before the law and perpetuated structural inequality within societies.

The relationship between declining public trust in institutions and the rule of law crisis was also emphasised by the study. Delays, perceived bias, and unequal treatment all led to lower levels of faith in legal systems, thanks to emphatic responses from those surveyed. And indeed, this result was compatible with recent work showing that trust in institutions was tightly correlated with perceived fairness, transparency, and efficiency of legal processes (Levi & Stoker, 2024). Individuals were non-compliant with laws or institutions, and those civil societies that made legal systems more flawed or biased in turn weakened governance structures.

This implied the interaction between institutional fragility and failures of governance, thus generating a compounded effect that aggravated the crisis of justice. Weak institutions failed to withstand political pressure and corruption, and poor governance compounded the decline in institutional capacity. This cycle also matched current theoretical ideas that identified the rule of law as part of an interconnected system shaped by both institutional and governance factors (Haggard & Tiede, 2023; Helmke & Rosenbluth, 2024). This problem led to the same circle turning, and little more than the color of the chart changed, as reform progress remained limited.

Their results also indicated that the crisis in the rule of law transcended legal institutions and instead impacted wider socio-political stability. It reported that weak justice systems were a cause of civil disorder and the decline in trust in democracy. More recent studies claimed that political instability and armed conflict are more likely in weak rule of law environments (World Justice Project, 2024; Fukuyama, 2023), which supported this observation. As a result, the erosion of legal legitimacy came with substantial costs for both governance and social bonds.

The report stressed the significance of inclusive legal frameworks in resolving access to justice difficulties. Affordable, accessible, and legal awareness were identified as enablers to good delivery of justice. This view was consistent with new data-led normative research on policy options favouring accessible and fair justice systems (OECD, 2024). These reforms were critical for closing the justice gap and augmenting social inclusion.

The results pointed to the importance of a set of reforms that strengthen judicial independence — and simultaneously improve administrative efficiency. By their reasoning, so-called legal reforms promoting principles of transparency, accountability, and capacity building were the most important conditions for improving the performance of a legal system (World Bank, 2024; Skaar, 2023). More resilient institutions could help counterbalance the impact of political interference and corruption, thereby bolstering the credibility of legal systems.

This study added another piece of evidence to the developing scholarship on the rule of law crisis, offering a piece of contemporary empirical evidence. It further argued that effectively addressing institutional fragility, governance deficits, and access to justice would necessitate a comprehensive and integrated response. The results indicated that piecemeal reforms were not adequate and that holistic approaches are necessary to support enduring advancements in legal systems. This echoed contemporary interdisciplinary scholarship stressing that effective law requires crosscutting cooperation on legal, political, and socio-economic fronts to build the rule of law and advance fair justice (North et al., 2023; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of various aspects like weak institutions, failures in governance, and unequal access to justice, the authors derived a conclusion that modern societies face a crisis of the rule of law driven by multiple factors. Weak institutional frameworks, lack of independence of the judiciary, and political interference have proved very harmful to the effectiveness of legal systems, according to the findings. Narrow governance failure in terms of corruption, administrative inefficiency, and ineffective policy implementation has created additional delays in service delivery and eroded the institutional credibility, along with increasing aversion towards the government. Furthermore, imbalanced opportunities to seek judicial resources, excessive legal fees, and procedural intricacy have obstructed individuals, especially those belonging to disadvantaged communities, from seeking justice. As these challenges are intertwined, confidence in the functioning of legal institutions collapsed as well, contributing to more extensive and systemic socio-political instability. The study highlighted the role of the rule of law as an essential pillar underpinning democracy, social justice, and sustainable development, where its deterioration had very serious ramifications for institutional legitimacy and social cohesion.

Future Directions

Future studies may investigate how new technologies like AI, Blockchain improve the transparency and efficiency of legal systems. Transformation studies offer greater insight into how the rule of law evolves over time and the long-term effects of institutional reforms. Comparative research in different countries or regions can determine best practices and contextual factors applicable to the delivery of justice. Subsequent research should also deeply interrogate how culture, socio-economic, and political variables have combined to shape access to justice and institutional performance. Future work may involve mixed-method approaches to capture quantitative trends and qualitative experiences together, in order to address more holistically the specific challenges and opportunities of progressing the rule of law.

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